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Managing the wild



Associate Professor Irus Braverman gets a kiss from an admirer.

Two fellowships will support Braverman's inquiry into conservation management

With prestigious fellowship support, **Associate Professor Irus Braverman** will embark on her next project while in residence at Cornell University during the 2013-14 academic year.

Braverman has been chosen to receive two major fellowships: a Society for the Humanities fellowship at Cornell, co-sponsored by that university's Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future; and a Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship, a prestigious

award of the American Council for Learned Societies that is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Braverman says she is particularly excited about working with two senior scholars from the University of California, Berkeley, who will be at Cornell in the fall: political scientist Wendy Brown and cultural studies scholar Judith Butler.

The Society for the Humanities fellowship is structured around the focal theme of "Occupation," and Braverman's proposal draws on an ethnographic study of sev-

eral important conservation institutions to explore how legal regimes facilitate the schism between captive (occupied) and wild (unoccupied) management.

During her time at Cornell, Braverman will be thinking and writing about the genealogy and significance of the *in situ/ex situ* dichotomy in nature conservation. Latin for "in" and "out" of place ("*situ*"), this dichotomy often stands for the dichotomy between nature and captivity. On one end, *in situ* is defined as on-site, natural conservation; on the other end, *ex situ* is off-site, or captive conservation. Working from interviews with leading conservationists, Braverman intends to look at how those terms have been understood and how this division has shaped the practices, models and regulation of the animal conservation movement. Furthermore, Braverman plans to question

the simplistic division between wild nature and civilized culture by illuminating their interdependency. More broadly, she is considering the possibility of conservation without nature.

Braverman says her research will focus on a few conservation organizations that take different sides on the *in situ/ex situ* question: the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature; the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums; and the Amphibian Ark. She expects to spend part of the year doing fieldwork in various locations, including Europe and the United States.

The project began last summer, Braverman says, during the process of writing her book *Zooland* (Stanford University Press, 2012). That book recently received a bronze medal, recognizing it as an outstanding book on current events, from the Independent Publisher Book Awards. It describes the world of the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Braverman shows how in the past 50 years, accredited zoos have come to redefine their mission from primarily one of entertainment to one of care and stewardship. She also describes how these zoos work cooperatively to manage their animals.

The Ryskamp fellowship will provide additional financial support for Braverman's work during the coming academic year. According to its sponsor, the fellowship "recognizes those whose scholarly contributions have advanced their fields and who have well-designed and carefully developed plans for new research."

Braverman's work is interdisciplinary in nature and draws on her interests in law, geography, anthropology, and science and technology studies. In addition to her Law School appointment, she serves as an adjunct professor of geography at UB.